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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SOFIA 001860

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL MOPS KCRM LY IZ BU

SUBJECT: BULGARIAN FOREIGN MINSTER DISCUSSES LIBYA, IRAQ,
ORGANIZED CRIME

REF: A. SOFIA 1875

B. M. JOHNSON - BRANDON/GAVITO E-MAILS 07 OCT 05
AND 10 OCT 05

Classified By: DCM Jeff Levine, reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. Foreign Minister Kalfin told the Ambassador October 27 that Bulgaria would be ready "soon" to continue discussions regarding a follow-on mission for Bulgarian soldiers in Iraq. We will follow up with the MFA the week of October 31. On the fate of the Bulgarian nurses sentenced to death in Libya, Kalfin reiterated his appreciation for President Bush's strong statement of support. He stressed the importance of making progress before the November 15 Libyan supreme court hearing and expressed his government's support for an early meeting of the U.S., EU, and Bulgaria that would also include the Libyans. UK Ambassador Hill confirmed that HMG had invited the Libyans to such a meeting in London and that "the assumption was" that Obeidi would attend. Kalfin expressed the GOB's determination to find the killer(s) of controversial banker Emil Kyulev (ref A) and crack down on organized crime. He asked for U.S. assistance in both areas. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) At a lunch hosted by FM Kalfin October 27 for the U.S. and UK ambassadors, Kalfin reiterated his government's pledge to delay the beginning of the current Bulgarian contingent's withdrawal from Iraq until after the December 15 elections. He said the government was discussing follow-on options in the context of President Purvanov's October 18 meeting with President Bush. He assured Beyrle that the government would be ready shortly to continue discussions regarding the nature of the Bulgarian follow-on mission. Kalfin implied that the GOB was giving the MEK mission a second look in the aftermath of President Purvanov's meetings and the Bulgarian army's visit to Camp Ashraf.

¶3. (C) The primary purpose of the lunch was to discuss next steps in the case of the Bulgarian nurses in Libya. Kalfin said the Bulgarians "do not expect a positive result" when the Libyan supreme court reviews the nurses' death sentence on November 15. A decision to uphold the sentences will make it much more difficult to resolve the case, Kalfin said, because public reaction in Bulgaria will be extremely negative. The GOB does not want to be in a position where the Libyans can say "either you do what we want or we kill them," because the perception in Bulgaria will be that the government is being blackmailed.

¶4. (C) Kalfin sketched the outlines of a settlement that would involve medical assistance for the victims of the Benghazi AIDS epidemic, possible forgiveness of Libya's 20 million USD debt to Bulgaria, the return of the nurses to Bulgaria, and "face-saving measures" for Qadhafi. A recently-created Bulgarian NGO is preparing to meet with the victims and their families to discuss medical assistance. The paper given to the Bulgarians by Qadhafi's son in London (ref B), while containing many unacceptable provisions, was a starting point for discussions, Kalfin said. At the same time, Kalfin noted that it is important for the U.S., UK and EU to "continue to make Qadhafi uncomfortable." He said he hoped the Council of Europe would issue a declaration affirming the nurses innocence on November 2. A fourth U.S./EU/Bulgaria trilateral and a U.S./EU demarche in Tripoli before November 15 would also be welcomed. Kalfin said that a postponement of the November 15 court decision would be a sign of Libya's seriousness.

¶5. (C) UK Ambassador Hill said the next step should be to "approach Tripoli in the next 24 hours and ask for a date" for the meeting between the U.S., UK, Bulgaria, and Libya. Based on PM Blair's recent conversation with Qadhafi, Hill said he was confident the Libyans would offer a date for the talks "within three or four days." He expressed guarded optimism, saying that "if we can engage them next week, things may go quickly."

¶6. (C) Kalfin assured both Ambassadors of the government's intention to crack down hard on organized crime in the wake of the murder of controversial banker Emil Kyulev on October 126. He called the killing "a threat to the very basis of the state." This echoed -- at least by implication -- Interior Minister Petkov's assertion that Kyulev's killing was a politically-motivated attack aimed at delaying Bulgaria's accession into the EU and undermining the current government.

Beyrle said such talk was not helpful in the absence of any supporting evidence, and Hill pointed out that Kyulev's past was itself "doubtful."

17. (C) Kalfin asked specifically for U.S. support in four areas:

-- Our assessment of forthcoming draft legislation aimed at giving police and prosecutors more power to fight organized crime.

-- Operational cooperation aimed at heroin trafficking through Bulgaria.

-- Unspecified "special equipment" for criminal investigations.

-- Increased cooperation and coordination between the Bulgarian intelligence and law enforcement services and their U.S. counterparts. "It is your choice which service you work with," Kalfin said, "but we really need your help and assistance."

Beyrle assured Kalfin that the U.S. stands ready to help Bulgaria. Embassy Sofia's Legal Attaché met subsequently with the Chief Secretary of the Interior Ministry to discuss specifics.

18. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.

BEYRLE